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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## OPEN FIRE-PLACES.



NOTHING has been more pleasant to note, in the home-life of the winter that is just now over and gone, than the growing use of open fires in our living-rooms, either of soft coal in grates or of wood on the hearth. Furnaces are certainly going out of favor as a sole means of heating our dwelling-

houses, though it is not likely they will ever be given up; we shall continue to use them for tempering the air of entries and passage-ways, and of those rooms that are only opened now and then. We cannot be governed in this matter by English example. Our climate is so very different from that of our island cousins that the "robust" theory of living they put so splendidly into practice would neither be healthy nor comfortable for us. Certainly we may come in time to live more hardily than we now think we can bear; children will be less cockered and coddled by their elders, and the elders themselves will take more liberal doses of whatever weather is going, and so cut down their doctors' bills.

But, to get all the good possible out of our open fires, we want two things—fire-places properly built for burning wood, and grates for burning coal, that shall be both pretty and economizing of fuel. Owing probably to our long disuse of wood as fuel, we have lost the rules for building fire-places that shall throw the heat well out into the room, and let us look our fill at the fire. We make our fire-places too square, and too deep, with sides too nearly at right angles to the back. The fire is hid in a cave, and the chimney eats up nearly all the heat. The fire-places in the old Dutch and New England houses are low in proportion to their breadth, and shallow, with sides well splayed. This way of building has a single eye to use, but as always happens when use is honestly put first in devising useful things, the ends of beauty are also served. The old fire-places were not only sufficient for their work, they were well proportioned, handsome to look at, and showed the whole beauty of the fire. We cannot make a fire-place for burning wood that shall be either serviceable or handsome, by simply taking the anthracite coal grates out of our chimneys, and lining the hole that is left with tiles or soap-stone. Out of such a hole it is not easy, it is probably impossible, by any device, to make what we want. But if a man is building a house, and wishes to have an open wood-fire, he must look to it that the chimney is rightly built from the start.

So long, however, as our American bituminous coals are as plentiful, good and cheap as they are at present, burning wood will be only a luxury for the rich, and soft coal, as we have agreed to call the bituminous fuel, will be more and more used. We are greatly in need of the right sort of grate for burning soft coal, and it were much to be wished that some one of our dealers in grates would either import such from England, where they are cheap and plenty, or would have them made here at home. We have one kind of grate, broad, low and generous, in which either soft coal or wood can be burned indifferently, but these grates are too large for the rooms in the greater part of our houses, and they are not economizing of fuel—a small fire is lost in them.

Now, in general, a New York house, if it be not on a corner, does not need a large fire in any one of the rooms. Our houses, with their party walls, keep one another warm, and only the narrow ends of the packing-boxes are exposed to the air. What is wanted, then, is the small English grate, holding but little coal, but throwing out into the room almost all the heat produced in combustion. Such a grate is figured in the book, "The House Beautiful," on page 230, but this is only one design out of many manufactured in England. They are made in shapes that admit of a good deal of ornament, the bar strongly and gracefully curved, with brass posts, or iron posts brass-mounted, at the sides, and back pieces with bold patterns cast in relief, and sometimes the grate is a coal-basket, or made to look like one, and supported on large andirons, with a great deal of brass ornamentation. Sometimes even a grate border of plain pattern (like the one referred to above) is cast in brass instead of iron. But when there is a brass fender, and brass-handled fire-irons, and

a copper or brass coal-hod, the brass grate-border is sure to be too much. If it is decided to have it, it would be better to have less brass in the other belongings of the fire-place.

In the best of these English grates, the ornamentation is kept simple, and is accented here and there to avoid commonplace. In one I have in my own house the pattern on the frame is only a running vine in narrow lines that run parallel to the sides, both on the sides of the frame and on the top, not changing their direction; then, round the opening there is a narrow border set with small whorls. All this is clearly designed and cast with neatness, but the effect is quiet, not at all striking. If, now, the face of the grate were kept straight, and were plain faced, the grate would have a monotonous look. This is avoided by giving a double curve to each bar, and ornamenting the face of each with a bead on the upper and lower edge, and a running vine between the beads. This enriches the whole grate, and gives it character. Then comes the small movable (and, at pleasure, removable) hob, and seems to put forth a hospitable hand of welcome to the guest as he draws near the laughing fire. These grates are cheap in England; what makes them dear, here, is the custom duty, the expense of packing, and the cost that always goes with any single importation. If they could be imported by some firm in quantities, they would not cost so much; for though the duty would be the same, the charge for packing and handling them would be distributed. But there is no reason why they should not make them here.

In another paper I will say something about the decorative treatment of the fire-place, the mantel-piece, and other belongings of the chimney-pier. As an "envoi" take to-day this verse attributed by an old writer to Homer. This gives us an authority of respectable antiquity for taking pleasure in an open fire. "A man is proud of his children, a town of its battlements, a plain of its horses, the ocean of its navies, riches ornament the house, just judges seated in the hall of justice are a noble spectacle, but the most pleasant sight, in my opinion, is that of a fire on the hearth, when Jupiter decks the ground with snow and frost."

CLARENCE COOK.

## THE UNION CLUB.

THE dimensions of this stately building probably exceed those of any similar one in the United States. Its situation, as a fair majority of cultivated New Yorkers know, is at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-first street. The sole entrance for members is on the side street just mentioned; massive doors of a severely simple sort are guarded at either base of the broad stoop by two imposing lamps. Through these rather majestic portals we enter the lower main hall of the building. Here the airy height of the ceilings, which meet the eye in a series of groined arches, first attracts us; but it is a height perfectly in proportion with the fine expansive hall itself, and produces no impression of incongruity. This hall, like all the larger apartments in the club, suggests that the new decorative ideas have invaded the building with considerable vigor, while they may not yet be said to have gained the mastery. Here, as elsewhere, they seem to struggle resolutely against the old-fashioned naturalistic forms. The wainscoting is a conventional Eastlake design, in chocolate-color and drab-green. The walls and arches, however, are frescoed with foliage and flowers accurately copied from nature. Perhaps the delicate shades and aerial, garlanded look of these ceilings should be called rather discordant with the heavy walnut staircase, at whose foot stands a handsome lamp on a newel post. One is almost impressed with some such attempted union as that of a mediæval English abbey and the lighter gracefulness of an Italian villa. This hall contains a superb pendant lamp, probably of wrought brass, whose ground-glass plates are most tastefully embellished; the whole affair, however, beautiful and curious as it is, should be less on the colossal plan, for perfect harmonization, even with a hall so broad and lofty. This floor is inlaid with the ordinary marble tiling of black and white. Its general effect is not without princeliness, though some of its details have been rather audaciously combined.

There are two "salons" on the ground floor—one in the east and one in the west portion of the building. The latter is by far the more pretentious room; it is indeed

not without a magnificence peculiarly its own. Immense in area, its floor is carpeted with warm, deep crimson, delightfully refreshing to the eye. All the woodwork is drab, in likeness to the paper, which bears a large gold "fleur de lis," in quatre-foils of light drab on a dark drab ground. The furniture of this apartment is especially odd. It is of some velvety material, and its changeable greenish-brown color doubtless represents one of those peculiar shadings recently brought to notice by William Morris, the English poet. The mantels, here as in almost every other chamber throughout the club, are especially worthy of note. They are of walnut, adorned with narrow gold panelings, on which vine-like adornments of leafage are painted with admirable skill. The chief mirror at the west end of this room deserves more than passing notice. It is set within a sort of alcove, with striking pilasters and entablatures to serve as its frame, these being embellished with exquisite semblances of running vines. "Student" lamps are used in this apartment, and the broad, low tables are covered with morocco-cased files of all the best London and New York weeklies.

The large room which faces on Fifth Avenue, is considerably smaller than the one just described, though its spaciousness is still a very distinct fact. Its carpet (which a witty member of the club once likened to "chow-chow") is of small, irregular figures, scattered over a ground of mustard-yellow. The furniture is a velvet rep, rich olive-brown in hue, and the leather wall-papery, on which is embossed a diaper-pattern of brown, black and gold, amid a green ground, has become the admiration of all who enjoy what is loveliest and most unique in upholstery. In the midst of this room is a circular divan, dear to the soul of the traditional club-lounger. The ceilings are heavily paneled and of much lighter tone than the walls. Three broad windows look forth upon Fifth Avenue. On the capacious tables are to be found copies of all the better New York daily journals. A voluminous oriental "portière" drapes the main doorway leading from the hall.

On the second floor the principal appointments of the hall are similar to those below. On our right, as we ascend the soft-carpeted stairs, we find the billiard-room; directly in front is the reading-room, or library, and on our left we gain a glimpse of the card-room. The design of the billiard-room walls may be called, as usual, mixed Eastlake and naturalistic. The wainscotings are delightfully quaint, being semi-Moorish in character. The floor is overspread with soft red rugs. The tables are of mingled satinwood and maple, and costly in the extreme. Black leather cushions line the walls of this apartment, and over them, at various intervals, jut forth chandeliers of nickel and brass, which, like those immediately above the billiard tables, are notable for their original nicety of workmanship.

The card-room is carpeted in warm crimson, while its wall-papery is fawn color, with a small sunflower as principal Queen Anne detail. The woodwork throughout is of ebony. Small card-tables, scattered here and there, at once attest the character of this room, whose chief defect is possibly a too sharp bringing together of contrasts. The mantel-effects are positive marvels of beauty, the mantels themselves being of ebony, with a red marble fireplace beneath.

Perhaps the most attractive and beautiful room in the club is its library. This is, in reality, two rooms, with a folding-door between them, kept constantly open. The low book-cases are of mahogany, while all the remaining woodwork is painted a dull, sombre red. The walls are of pale green, with very charming Eastlake decorations, while Hebrew inscriptions in gilt characters gleam at intervals along the ceiling. Two very long tables, covered with green leather, bear a number of rare faience and porcelain lamps—these tables themselves being strictly in the Queen Anne pattern, with vermiculated panels set into their mahogany sides. The mantels, also mahogany, are likewise of the Queen Anne style, but here the total absence of blue china is a conspicuous point, their niches being perfectly empty. The carpet and "portières" of this apartment are of dull tints, but the chandeliers, made of cedar-wood with fantastic embellishments, are remarkable for their beauty and brilliancy.

In the very extensive dining-room, on the third floor of the building, we find a light tone prevalent, though the gold-and-brown paper is divided into large panels



by a wide maroon border. One might call the carpet in this room rather too furiously red. An immense mantel-piece is at the west side, wrought in two-colored woods, and in verde-antique marble with inlaid bronze panels containing figures in bold relief. The steel-and-bronze grate is ornamented by two splendid steel griffons, after the manner of andirons.

The two private dining-rooms are of a much more unobtrusive style. In these we find such delightful features as a carved ebony table; crystal chandeliers, arranged as brackets, in each corner; brown and pale-buff furniture, relieved with mediæval shapes of dragons; carpet of a half-Eastern, half-Gothic design, with the Oriental yellow as the basis of color; and papering of the favorite brown, bronze and gold mixture, with something of a tapestry texture.

Altogether, the Union Club, since its recent decorations were made, occupies a high position among the most luxurious of New York structures. Refinement is everywhere evident, tempering anything like a too lavish display, and winning from wealthful expenditure its best practical results.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

### THE DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY ROOMS.

WHEN the Decorative Art Rooms were first opened in New York, not long ago, the enterprise was an experiment. It was the first definite attempt which had been made to collect this artistic handwork of which so much had been done since the Centennial Exhibition, and put it on the market in a regular business way. It was an attempt to bring women who wanted the work to do, into direct communication with women who wanted the work done; for, although it is by no means a feminine monopoly, the pretty rooms on East Nineteenth street are full of the handiwork of women, and probably women are the principal traffickers in these dainty wares.

The enterprise is a success. The experiment has proved a most palpable hit. At a very moderate commission on the sales, the rooms have proved self-supporting financially; women in all parts of the country find here a market for any work of genuine value; the demand for decorative art work has been stimulated by being systematically supplied, and, fortunately for all concerned, a good standard of excellence in work has been maintained by a committee who set their faces as a flint against artistic rubbish.

Work, in order to be accepted and placed on sale, must have a certain amount of artistic beauty and good mechanical execution, while on pieces of unusual excellence the seal of the society is bestowed.

An hour in these decorative art salesrooms gives one a very fair idea of what American women are doing just now. The first object which attracts the attention of the visitor on entering the hall, is an old-fashioned distaff with its bunch of flax. A distaff is the latest whim of the devotees of bric-à-brac, and has found its way from the neglected garret into many an American parlor. Who would have thought there were so many? Or is there a manufactory where they supply the demand for old-fashioned spinning wheels? Opposite hangs a medallion in plaster, a piece of specimen work in modeling, and below is the card of the teacher, stating terms for lessons.

Entering the front room at the right, one's first impression is of a bazaar full of dainty fabrics, and vivid with color, which is so broken into bits, that it gives a kaleidoscopic effect. All this color resolves itself presently into screens, decorated china, on the mantel, in cases and hanging on the wall, and also large cases full of Kensington art needlework.

This work is, much of it, beautiful and effective. It is done in every variety of color and material, from the design on burlap or self-colored canvas, done in the Kensington crewels, which will wash, up to the most elaborate satin screens, embroidered in silk. From the beginning of time, women have found pleasure and profit in needlecraft, and I have seen birds and branches as faithfully wrought out in silk embroidery by one of our New England grandmothers, who had only her "sampler stitch" to guide her, as any of this royal art needlework. The difference in the value of that work and such as this lies wholly in the design. Women have learned to draw, and so, whatever the design, it has an artistic value and means something. For instance, this "etching" on a gray canvas screen of the figure of a woman catching birds in a net in the air. It is exquisitely drawn; the figure, with its wind-blown drapery, has the strong and simple outlines of the antique. The birds are live birds, executed with such spirit that you can almost hear the light rush of their wings in flight. This is, in design, the best piece of needlework in the room, and is one of the only two which have been stamped with the seal of the society.

The design is drawn by the Vice-President of the so-

ciety and worked out by a lady who does much of this work, and who would earn much more money than she already does if she were able to draw her own designs. This emphasizes the fact that women who wish to earn money by doing this kind of work must have art training. They must be independent in design. The artisan must be also the artist, or else must be content with the second-rate wages always awarded to mere mechanical execution.

Another beautiful screen on which the seal of the society has been placed, is of yellow satin, bordered with a wide margin of rich maroon velvet and fringe. Across this gold background is thrown a blackberry branch, in leaf and blossom. It is very faithfully done, both in drawing and in color.

A very little experience in drawing our American plant-forms teaches one to go for beauty and sharpness of outline in the leaf and flower, to wild flowers and weeds, rather than to the petted plants of the greenhouse. Out in the still green spaces of the woods, they grow as they please, and keep their individuality, while cultivated flowers, like cultivated people, are apt to be very much alike. "The æsthetic bulrush" waves in every corner of these decorative art rooms, and when this has been neglected, the artist has still found her most effective designs among plants which bear it a family resemblance. Strong-leaved flags, "fleur-de-lis," stately golden-rod are here, while ferns and grasses have a quaint, delicate beauty of which one never tires.

These screens are framed, some of them in ebonized wood, and some in light wood, as maple, according to color. Some of the frames are elaborately carved, some are entirely plain. In the cases filled with needlework, are articles of every variety, from the tiny Japanese doyleys, with a bird or butterfly, or hieroglyphic etched on them, to the elaborate tablespread of satin, of the most æsthetic shade of green, and embroidered in gold. There are window curtains and hangings for portières. There are embroidered panels for chairs, and several chairs, upholstered, display the work to advantage.

There is much decorated china, of various degrees of excellence in execution. On the whole, the work indicates a hopeful outgrowth from the idea that decoration is picture-making. The work is done in a truer spirit, with more simplicity, and consequently with more effect than in our first amateur work, and we are not nearly so likely, as we were in the beginning of our ceramic craze, to get a lovely face on a painted dinner plate, or Guido's Aurora on a plaque. Some one has dared to put Cabanel's "Echo," in sepia colors on a plaque, and although the mechanical execution is fair, one shivers at the glitter of the enamel and the hard outlines of the figure. The committee should not have passed it. It is bad art. The prettiest and most satisfying decorations on exhibition are those which throw single flowers and grasses, with an occasional bird or butterfly across the solid tinted background.

Some of the little wooden plates decorated in water-color are very well done. The plates themselves are quite dainty. They are made of clean, sweet maple, cut into sheets the thickness of blotting paper, and then bent into shape. One is decorated in the peacock feather, now so popular, and on another is a bit of golden-rod, with a blue bird flying over it. Sometimes the wood is so shaded in color that it has the effect of a sky, across which birds are flying.

There is illuminated stationery in all colors and designs; all the pretty and dainty trifles that a fertile fancy can conceive.

Among the pottery is one tiny jug, which one familiar with her work recognizes instantly as that of Miss McLaughlin, of Cincinnati, who has rediscovered the Limoges glaze, and is producing much exquisite work. This little jug is a specimen of that falence. As unmistakably characteristic of the artist are Madam Teresa Hegg's water-colors which hang here on the wall, two flower pieces, which have been sent all the way from Germany by this celebrated flower painter. There are a number of decorated tiles, some of them very good in design, and some very commonplace, with a sore lack of imagination. Two young ladies in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, have sold much of this work here. They fill orders promptly, and do good work.

A set of tiles around a grate is done in a running design of holly. In drawing and color, it is bold and effective, rather than beautiful.

There is very little wood-carving. Two hall chairs in oak, elaborately carved and upholstered in green leather, are the work of some carver in this city. Of women's work in wood, there are but two specimens, a hanging cabinet and a parlor easel with two sliding shelves and a portfolio. Both articles are of black walnut, elaborately carved in natural and conventional designs; they are from St. Louis, and have the characteristics of what is known as the Cincinnati wood-carving.

Two bas-reliefs in plaster, on an easel, are marked "sold." One gives two cranes, against the background of a closed barn door. The other is a group of the same birds with the addition of a woman with a baby in her arms. One or two other small pieces in full relief complete the modeling on exhibition, all of which is the work of two ladies in Newark.

There are mirror frames, some of which are pretty and unique. One is a beveled frame of ebonized wood, painted in sprays of purple convolvuli. Another is a flat frame of dead gold; trailing across the top and half-way down the side are some scarlet running vine, with sharp pointed leaves, like tongues of flame; and across the top and turning the corner in like manner, is written in old, quaint, illuminated text: "I behold my shadow, and pass." It is a pretty conceit, and beautifully executed.

This is a sketch, and by no means an exhaustive catalogue of the contents of the Decorative Art Rooms. It is pleasant to add, that while these notes were written, work was sold, orders were taken, and the rooms were constantly full of interested spectators and purchasers.

CALISTA HALSEY.

### OUR FIRST PAGE ILLUSTRATION.

THE etching by Jules Jacquemart, which illustrates our first page, shows us a "console" of the period of Louis XV. This piece of furniture, which is shaped like half of a table, is fastened against the wall, often in front of a mirror. The wood is elaborated with paintings, covered with hard varnish to imitate the effects produced by the Chinese lacquers, which were in vogue at the time this table was made. It is probably by the celebrated Martin, who gave his name to the varnish he discovered. He was only a carriage painter, but the simple words "Vernis par Martin" added to the signature of the artist would augment the value of an article ten-fold.

The assemblage of easy curves which combine to form the general outline and the elementary details of this "ensemble" are typical of that period of the history of designing, when the stately and heavy Louis XIV style had given place to more graceful forms which seem to bend themselves in homage to "la belle Du Barri," and her royal "La France." When the regency came, art felt the influence of a lax government, and style degenerated into the "Rocaille," and from there fell into the "Rococo."

The "garniture" of fine pieces which stands on the console belonged to Marie Antoinette. Under the reign of Louis XVI the art of decoration reached the most exquisite perfection it has yet attained in France.

The centre piece is a Chinese vase in craquelin, with mountings in gilt bronze, chiselled by Gouthière, the master of all French bronze workers. Since the reign of Louis XV, when the first embassy from China reached Paris, Chinese earthenware had become very fashionable, and the influence of Oriental design is very apparent in the Chinese figures, very French in style, which we find in the compositions of Watteau and Boucher, and which received the very appropriate cognomen of "Chinois de paravent." The figures in the candelabra are by Falconet, who, after he had adorned Versailles and Trianon with exquisite little bits of art, went to Russia to execute the colossal statue of Peter the Great.

The bases are in white marble, trimmed with bronze in "or mat."

### THE HARMONY OF COLORS.

WITH some of the Oriental nations, especially the Japanese, who have taught us so much in Decorative Art, the knowledge of harmony in color seems to be intuitive. The commonest designs of the Japanese artist or even artisan show how rarely the judgment of the workman is at fault in this regard. With us Americans, however, it is different. Those who understand the combination of colors with reference to artistic effect are decidedly in the minority. Many of the most beautiful combinations, it is true, are arrived at by chance, taste aiding in the selection; but there are certain principles underlying such happy results, indicating beforehand the colors that will blend appropriately, and anybody may learn these who will take the trouble to study the chromatic scale, as it may be called, which we give below. Any one of these colors placed in proximity to the colors that immediately precede or follow it will allow of that easy gradation or transition which results in harmony, while contrast will be obtained by a further range.

To apply these colors, supposing you wish to associate silver blond with an appropriate tint other than a different shade of blond, you may associate with tawny, or, if seeking an effective contrast, with violet red. Taking